



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte  
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +  
Social Care Professionals

## Psychologists Registration Board

# Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements

Clinical Psychologists | Counselling Psychologists | Educational Psychologists



**Standards of Proficiency – Public Consultation**

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# Introduction

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. Our role is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals. CORU was set up under the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*. It is made up of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the Registration Boards, one for each profession named in our Act.

On 21 July 2017, the then Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD, confirmed the establishment of the Psychologists Registration Board. From its establishment the Board has been working towards introducing statutory regulation for the profession of psychology.

The Psychologists Registration Board has made significant progress towards this goal having identified a regulatory model that will allow for the protection of the title 'psychologist' in Ireland and, ultimately, the protection to the public.

The introduction of this regulatory model will come in two streams.

## Stream One

Introduction of Statutory Regulation for:

- ➡ Clinical Psychologists
- ➡ Counselling Psychologists
- ➡ Educational Psychologists

## Stream Two

Introduction of a regulatory model that will facilitate the regulation of all other psychology specialisms and protection of the title 'psychologist'

The Board will establish four divisions of its register: a division for each of the three areas of specialisation identified in Stream One and a fourth division that will enable the protection of the title 'psychologist' in Stream Two.

In establishing each division of its register, the Board is responsible for setting the requirements for entry. The first of these requirements are what are known as pre-registration education and training requirements.

## Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements

The requirements each Registration Board set for entry to its register are competency based: the Board sets the threshold level of professional knowledge, skills and behaviours that is required for safe and effective practice. By setting this threshold for entry, the Board provides the public with assurance that all registered professionals are trained to a consistent and acceptable level for safe practice, ensuring public protection. These standards are known as the *Standards of Proficiency*.

Once a register is opened, all **new entrants into practice** of that profession must hold a recognised qualification that has been assessed as consistently producing graduates that meet all the *Standards*.

Education providers design their programmes to deliver on all the *Standards* and make an application to the Registration Board for their programme to be approved. The Board sets what are known as *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*, all of which have to be met as part of the programme approval process.

Taken together the *Standards* and the *Criteria* are known as the Registration Board's **Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements**.

If the Board determines that the programme meets all of its pre-registration education and training requirements, it approves the qualification, which is subsequently listed on its Approved Qualifications Bye-Law.

Any applicant holding an approved qualification is eligible to apply for entry to the Register.

The Registration Board's pre-registration education and training requirements **only apply to new entrants into practice in Ireland (i.e. new graduates or international applicants)**.

The Psychologists Registration Board has drafted three distinct sets of draft *Standards of Proficiency* and *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*; one set each for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists and has opened a public consultation process seeking feedback from all stakeholders.

This public consultation will provide you with the opportunity to provide feedback on this key step towards opening divisions of the register for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists.

This eBook resource aims to support stakeholders in engaging with this consultation process by providing detail around what the *Standards of Proficiency* are and how they are used in regulation.



# Chapter 1

## The Standards of Proficiency: The Basics



### What are the *Standards of Proficiency*?

The standards of proficiency articulate the threshold knowledge, skills and professional behaviours that are required of all entrants to the professional register. This means that the standards are set at the entry level of competence needed to enable a person to practise autonomously and safely and, in so doing, keep the public safe. They are comprised of:

- ➡ **Knowledge Based Requirements:** describe the elements of theoretical or learned knowledge required the safe practice of the profession; and
- ➡ **Skills Based Requirements:** describe the practical or skills-based application of knowledge or learning.

Written as individual statements, collectively the *Standards of Proficiency* encompass the three key components of the learning and development required to form a proficient professional who is safe for practice:

- ➡ the **knowledge** required upon which a student can work towards a demonstration of competency;
- ➡ the **skills** that flow from the application of this knowledge in practice; and
- ➡ the **professional behaviours** that underpin the delivery of safe and effective practice.



The *Standards of Proficiency* form a foundational pillar in the Registration Board's regulatory system. It works together with the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics* and *Continuing Professional Development requirements* – both of which registrants must adhere to – to ensure the safe practice of practitioners and, through this, ensure the protection of the public.

## Key Regulatory Pillars



Standards of proficiency



Code of professional conduct and ethics



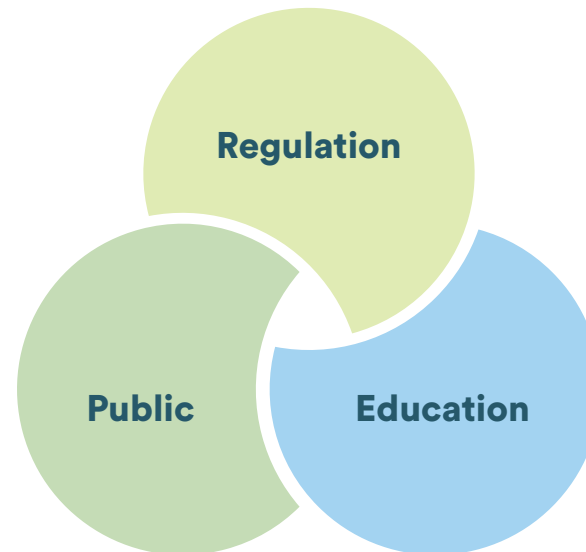
Continuing Professional Development



## What are the *Standards* used for?

The standards are used in a number of settings:

- ➔ **Regulation:** they set the minimum level of knowledge and skills required to enter the professional register. All applicants – from Ireland and internationally – must demonstrate achievement of all the standards as part of the registration process.
- ➔ **Education:** education providers that prepare students to practise a profession upon graduation – and who seek approval from the Board – use the standards to design their education and training programmes.
- ➔ **Public:** the standards help the public understand the threshold level of service they can expect from a registered health and social care professional.



## Where do the *Standards* come from?

The Psychologists Registration Board is responsible for drafting the standards of proficiency that will set the threshold level competencies for entry into each of the three divisions.

The Board is comprised of practitioners, representatives from education and training and lay members. This allows for a broad range of voices and perspectives shaping their design, thereby ensuring that the standards are relevant and consistent with current practice, that they are aligned with service user and employer needs and that they support the education and training of a sustainable, flexible and dynamic future workforce.

Where appropriate – and in order to ensure the breadth of specialist area specific knowledge and experience – the Board consults with external expertise during its drafting process.

### **The Board undertakes an extensive research process which informs the drafting of its standards. This involves:**

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- ➡ review of comparator international professional standards;
- ➡ consideration of developments in curriculum and assessment design; and
- ➡ understanding of the contemporary practice of the profession in Ireland, alongside the changes and evolutions in health and social care practice and delivery.

## **Who is involved in this?**

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All key stakeholders involved in the practice of each of the three areas of specialisation – practitioners, education providers, professional bodies, employers, unions, as well as all members of the public – are invited through this public consultation process to submit their views and feedback on the draft *Standards*.

Following this consultation process, the Board will review and assess all the feedback submitted from stakeholders and, where appropriate, revise its *Standards*.

In setting its *Standards of Proficiency*, the Board is informed by international best practice in education and practice and by the views and perspectives of a diverse body of stakeholders.

## Chapter 2

# Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists: Reflecting their Distinctive Practice and Identity

**The Psychologists Registration Board has developed three distinct sets of standards: one for Clinical Psychologists, another for Counselling Psychologists and a final set for Educational Psychologists.**

Entry onto each division of the register requires the articulation of the threshold knowledge, skills and professional behaviours a registrant in that area of specialisation must demonstrate. The *Standards* drafted for each area of specialisation reflects the distinctive character, practice and identity of their practice.

However, while there are distinctions between Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology, there are also areas of commonality between them by virtue of their identification as health and social care professions. These are articulated in Domains 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the *Standards*. Known as *Framework Standards of Proficiency*, they are set by the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and apply across each of the professions CORU regulates. Each Registration Board adopts all the *Framework Standards*.

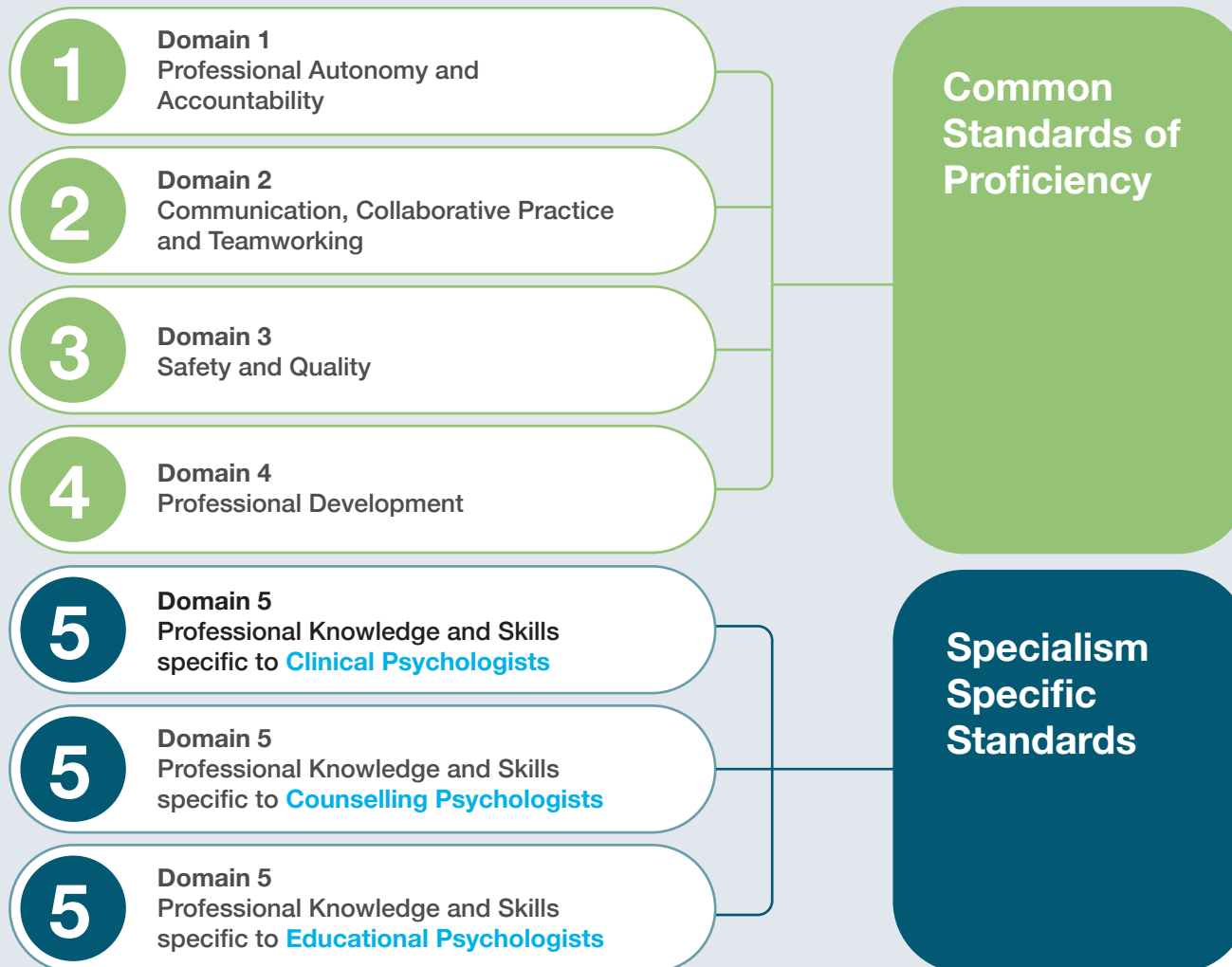
**Domain 5** of the draft *Standards* documents reflects the distinctive identity and practice of Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology. The Psychologists Registration Board has drafted these standards.

There is no hierarchy across the standards; each standard is as important as another. It is the achievement of **all** the standards that demonstrates a person is ready to join the Register and ensures public protection.



# Chapter 3

## Structure of the Standards of Proficiency



# 1

## Domain 1: Professional Autonomy and Accountability

**This domain is concerned with the professional and ethical behaviours of practitioners. Key areas of this proficiency include:**

- taking responsibility for professional practice and working within the legal, ethical and practice boundaries of the area of specialisation;
- working in the best interest of service users that reflects their will and preference;
- ensuring informed consent is received from the service user; and
- maintaining professional boundaries in the delivery of care.

# 2

## Domain 2: Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking

**This domain focuses on the development and use of open, responsive and appropriate communication approaches and tools to engage effectively with service users and colleagues. This includes practitioners being able to:**

- acknowledge the service user as an active participant in their care;
- adapt and modify communications approaches and styles to reflect service user needs and presentation; and
- recognise the dynamics of working as part of team, including working alongside colleagues from other professions.

**Common  
Standards of  
Proficiency**

# 3

## Domain 3: Safety and Quality

**This domain is concerned with the ability of practitioners to deliver safe and quality care through the preparation for, delivery of and evaluation and audit of psychological services. Key to this area of proficiency is the ability of practitioners to:**

- ➡ gather, analyse and evaluate all necessary information when identifying and determining an appropriate intervention course;
- ➡ evaluate, review and modify an approach to intervention, together with the service user; and
- ➡ establish and maintain safe environments for the delivery of service user care.

# 4

## Domain 4: Professional Development

**This domain articulates standards around engagement in Continuing Professional Development, including:**

- ➡ the importance of participating in professional development and education opportunities; and
- ➡ the development of self-reflection and evaluation skills as part of professional continual improvement.

**Common  
Standards of  
Proficiency**

## Chapter 4

# Specialism-Specific Standards of Proficiency

### 5

#### Domain 5: Professional Knowledge and Skills

Domain 5 articulates the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are specific to each area of specialisation – Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists – that reflect the specific contexts and environments of practice and the service user groups practitioners are engaged in.

These standards are informed by relevant and contemporary theory, practice knowledge and evidence.

It is in these standards that you will see the distinctive character and identity of each of the areas of specialisation emerge.

### Feedback

is invited on Domain 5



Articulated to reflect the different scope of practice across the three areas of specialisation, these standards include areas such as:

- ➡ knowledge of the psychological theories, model and approaches, relevant to practice of each area of specialisation, and the impact of systems, contexts and other factors on their application in practice;
- ➡ the appropriate skills needed to establish, build, maintain and safely conclude a professional relationship, while recognising the range of factors that can influence a relationship with a service user;
- ➡ knowledge, critical evaluation and application of the range of assessment methods used in practice, integrating assessment data to inform case formulation and psychological intervention planning;
- ➡ designing, applying, monitoring and evaluating interventions, including the ability to reformulate and revise approaches as necessary; and
- ➡ recognising the need for self-reflexivity in practice and understanding the role of the 'self' within the professional relationship.

# Chapter 5

## Have your say!



### The Psychologists Registration Board's draft *Standards of Proficiency* for:

- ➡ Clinical Psychology
- ➡ Counselling Psychology
- ➡ Educational Psychology

are available to access on: <https://coru.ie/public-protection/public-consultations/current-consultations/>

**We are looking for your feedback and perspective. We would like your views on:**

- ➡ whether the standards are set at threshold level for entry into practice for each of the specialisms; and
- ➡ the requirements set by the Board for practice placement.

You can access the consultation questionnaires and all relevant information on the CORU website:

[www.coru.ie](https://www.coru.ie)

The consultations are open for feedback from 7 October 2024 to 29 November 2024